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ABSTRACT

Self-disclosure is a process by which individuals permit themselves to be known by a select other and has been shown to be central to the development and maintenance of close relationships. Two studies were done to investigate whether people self-disclose for reasons that are related to a relationship with their listener and whether the intimacy level of the disclosure is affected by its functional value. In the first study, 144 undergraduates wrote self-disclosing paragraphs to one of two hypothetical recipients: a significant other, or a stranger (a new acquaintance). Reasons for disclosure were found to vary significantly with the participant's relationship with the target, and disclosures for purposes of self-clarification or self-expression were more intimate than those for purposes of eliciting information or social control. In the second study, 119 undergraduates maintained daily records of interactions in which they self-disclosed. Reasons for disclosure again varied with the recipient, and certain functions were associated with the same targets in each study. The relationship between function and intimacy level was also replicated, with the most intimate disclosures being associated with the goals of self-expression and social validation. The importance of the reasons for disclosure in understanding its various dimensions, such as appropriateness and intimacy, was discussed. (Author/SM)

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The Function of Self-Disclosure in Social Interaction[1]

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Abstract

Two studies were conducted to investigate whether people self-disclose for different reasons depending on their relationship with their listener, and whether the intimacy level of the disclosure is affected by its functional value. In the first study, 144 undergraduates wrote self-disclosing paragraphs to one of two hypothetical recipients: a Significant Other, or a Stranger (a new acquaintance). Reasons for disclosure were found to vary significantly with the participant's relationship with the target, and disclosures for purposes of self-clarification or self-expression were more intimate than those for purposes of eliciting information or social control. The disclosures to the Stranger were the least intimate of the two conditions. In the second study, 119 undergraduates maintained daily records of interactions in which they self-disclosed. For each interaction, they recorded the intimacy level of the interaction, and their reasons for disclosing. Reasons for disclosure again varied with the recipient, with certain functions being associated with the same targets in each study. Romantic Partners received the most intimate disclosures, while participants felt the most satisfied with interactions with relatives. The relationship between function and intimacy level was also replicated, with the most intimate disclosures being associated with the goals of self-expression and social validation. The importance of the reasons for disclosure in understanding its various dimensions, such as appropriateness and intimacy, was discussed.

The function of self-disclosure in social interaction

The study of the subjective reasons for revealing oneself through verbal self-disclosure has been largely neglected by social psycholgists. It has been hypothesized (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Morton & Douglas, 1981) that a person's relationship with the recipient of the communication will affect the outcome he or she desires to achieve through self-disclosure, and that both the desired outcome and the relationship with the recipient will affect the intimacy level of the information a person will choose to reveal.

Self-disclosure can be defined as "any information about himself which Person A communicates verbally to Person B." (Cozby, 1973, p. 73). This information refers to the self, and includes personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future. Self-disclosure is a process by which individuals permit themselves to be known by a select other and has been shown to be central to the development and maintainance of close relationships (Gilbert, 1976; Jourard, 1959; Prager, 1986; Rubin & Shenker, 1978).

The social penetration theory of Altman and Taylor (1973) proposes that the intimacy level of self-disclosure follows a systematic course as a relationship develops, progressing from nonintimate disclosing of relatively unemotional, trivial and superficial aspects of the self, to the intimate disclosure of private and vulnerable core aspects of the self. One study which was supportive of Altman and Taylor's theory was conducted by Morton (1978), who found that married couples disclosed more intimate

information to each other than to opposite sex strangers. Other research has also shown that the privacy of information disclosed to another increases with acquaintance, and is highest with those with whom one feels closest (Frankfurt, 1973; Gitter & Black, 1976).

Derlega and Grzelak (1979) proposed that the function self-disclosure serves within the relationship may also change as the relationship develops, or that the function of self-disclosure may vary among different types of relationships. The functional aspect of self-disclosure refers to the expressive value and/or instrumental effectiveness of the self-disclosure as perceived by the discloser. Derlega and Grzelak suggested five possible functions of self-disclosure: 1) self-expression, release of pent-up feelings; 2) self-clarification, talking about one's beliefs and opinions to clarify one's own position; 3) social validation, eliciting feedback from others, or validating one's self-concept; 4) relationship development, acting as a vehicle to developing close relationships and finding out about the recipient; and 5) social control, operating as a tool for controlling and even exploiting others.

Indirect evidence exists to support this five-category system. Self-disclosure has been shown to serve the functions of self-expression and self-clarification when communication is with a therapist (Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Truax and Carkhuff, 1965), and to serve the function of relationship development with college dormitory roommates (Frankfurt, 1973). However, no research has yet been conducted which directly investigates this five-category system for classifying the function of self-disclosure, nor has the function of self-disclosure within established interpersonal relationships been

investigated. Recent reviews (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Morton & Douglas, 1981) have indicated that identifying and measuring the major sources of value, or function that self-disclosure has for individuals will allow for better prediction of individual's self-disclosing behavior and a greater understanding of its importance in the maintainance of personal relationships.

The objectives of the current work were, first, to investigate the functions self-disclosure served within the context of several different kinds of relationships. Secondly, the present investigation sought to replicate previous findings supporting Altman and Taylor's theory that the content of self-disclosure becomes more private and personal as acquaintance increases. In particular, comparisons were made between different types of established relationships, as well as between established and undeveloped relationships.

Finally, this research investigated whether the intimacy level of the self-disclosure would vary depending upon the subjective function of the self-disclosure. It was expected, for example, that people disclosing for Social Control would share less intimate information than those disclosing for Self-Expression; or, that those disclosing to Elicit Information would disclose less than those disclosing for Self-Clarification.

Two experiments were conducted to test the above-listed hypotheses. In the first, participants disclosed in a hypothetical situation set up by the experimenter, and reported possible functional values they believed their disclosures would serve in the actual situation. In the second, participants monitored their actual

self-disclosing interactions on a daily basis, reporting their reason for self-disclosing in each interaction.

Study I

Method

Sample

Subjects were 150 students enrolled in introductory psychology classes at a private university in the southwest, who particpated in the experiment to fulfill a course requirement. Data was collected from 88 females and 62 males ranging in age from 18 to 21, with an average age of 18.6.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through verbal announcements in classes, by experimental signup sheets, and by advertisements posted around the Psychology office. Data were collected from groups of less than 50 subjects in a large classroom. Each subject received a questionnaire booklet, which described a hypothetical disclosure recipient to whom they were to direct their self-disclosures.

Participants were randomly placed into one of three relationship conditions, the instructions for each of which were as follows:

Group 1 - "Stranger" condition: Imagine yourself in the following situation: You have just started a new semester at school and are waiting for your first class to begin. You begin talking with the person next to you, who is of the same sex as you. He/she suggests that you have lunch together after class and you accept. You decide to go off campus and find a very pleasant, quiet place where you can relax, take your time, and enjoy some conversation with

your new acquaintance.

Group 2 -- "Close friend" condition: Imagine yourself in the following situation: You are having lunch in a pleasant, quiet place with your closest same-sex friend. You have known this friend for a couple of years and feel that you can talk comfortably with this person.

Group 3 --"Romantic relationship" condition: (For this condition, subjects were first asked if they currently were in such a relationship and, if so, were asked to think of that person when completing the questionnaire). Imagine yourself in the following situation: You have just finished a quiet dinner and are settling in for coffee and private conversation with this person. (Since many subjects were not currently involved in a long-term romantic relationship, rather than turn away the subjects the decision was made to allow these subjects to use the instructions for Group 2, and to focus on their closest friend. As a result, for Study 1, Groups 2 and 3 were combined into a "Significant Other" group.)

Subjects were then instructed to write a paragraph of 20 sentences or less describing something personal about themselves that they would be willing to share with the assigned recipient. After the subject completed this paragraph, he/she turned the page and was asked to respond in writing to the following question: Why might you share this personal information with this particular person?

The participant then turned the page again, and was asked to check, from a list provided by the authors, the most applicable reason that described why he/she would share the above-mentioned personal information.

Instruments

Function of self-disclosure. Subjects were asked to check the category that best described their reason for disclosing from a check-list of predetermined categories provided by the authors. The check-list included the categories described by Derlega and Grzelak (1979). However, given that Derlega and Grzelak's categories were based on speculation and had not been validated using experimental procedures, subjects in the current study were first asked to provide their reasons for disclosing in a free response format, i.e. in their own words. They were allowed to provide multiple reasons for disclosing. A rating scheme was devised to code the reasons for disclosing given by the subjects in the free response. It included four of the five Derlega and Grzelak categories unchanged: Self-Clarification, Self-Expression, Social Validation and Social Control. The relationship development category was divided into two separate categories: Eliciting Information, in which self-disclosure was a vehicle to obtain information about the recipient, and Relationship Enhancement, in which the purpose of self-disclosure was to develop or enhance the relationship, and make it grow.

The second author and two other raters, blind to the purpose of the study or the check-list responses, coded the free responses using this coding scheme. Raters were encouraged to code only those responses which clearly belonged in one of the Derlega and Grzelak categories. The purpose of this rating was to ascertain how many reasons for disclosing would remain unaccounted for by the categories. The coding scheme was found to be exhaustive; only one function was listed by two subjects which was unscorable, and that

was self-disclosure for the purpose of helping the other person resolve his/her problems through hearing of a similar situation experienced by the subject. Interrater agreement for the coding scheme, based on 80% of the subjects' responses was 86% with 2 out of 3 agreement used as the criterion, and 83% with unanimous agreement used as the criterion, which was considered adequate reliability. The function of self-disclosure check-list used the same categories, and was used in the data analysis because it was easier to score.

Intimacy level of self-disclosure. The intimacy level of self-disclosure was coded from a 20-sentence free-response description of the subjects' personal thoughts and feelings that they wrote as if disclosing to the specified target person. Intimacy level was scored on two dimensions, as described by Morton (1978): 1) Descriptive, presenting facts about oneself that otherwise are unavailable to the public; and 2) Evaluative, presenting emotions, judgements, and/or opinions when disclosing.

The self-descriptive paragraphs were categorized on two 1 - 5 scales adapted by the second author (Owen, 1982) from Morton's (1978) scheme for coding Descriptive and Evaluative self-disclosure, resulting in two intimacy level ratings for each self-descriptive paragraph. For scoring purposes, a description of each level for each of the two dimensions was provided, e.g. Level 1 Descriptive was "...included information about oneself that is very personal; and an internalizing of that information. This included the effects that the information has on the behavior of the individual." Level 2 Evaluative was "Expressions of emotion [were present but] were detached from the individual and not accompanied by causes and/or

effects on the thoughts, feelings, and/or opinions of the individual" (Owen, 1982, pp. 63-69).

All of the self-descriptive paragraphs were scored by the second author. Eighty per cent (120) of the self-disclosure paragraphs were crossrated by two additional raters, trained by the second author in the scoring system, in order to determine the interrater reliability of the intimacy level rating scheme. Agreement among 2 out of 3 raters was 91%, and for 3 out of 3 raters 83%.

Personnel

Raters for all measures were upper level undergraduate and graduate psychology students who were trained thoroughly by the second author in the rating procedures.

Results

Of the 150 subjects, complete data was available for 144. Sixty-four responded to the Stranger relationship condition, 83 to the Significant Other condition. The reasons given for self-disclosing by male and female subjects are shown in Table 1. An 8 (function) x 2 (sex) chi squared analysis indicated no differences in the frequency with which the various functions were selected by men and women.

Insert Table 1 about here

Function of self-disclosure and relationship to recipient.

The association between the relationship condition and the function of self-disclosure was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 29.87$, dF = 15, $p < .0001$). Cited more frequently in the Significant Other

condition were the functions of Expression (94.4%), Self-Clarification (80%), and Social Validation (73.1%). The functions of Social Control (72.7%) and Eliciting Information (80%) were mentioned more frequently in the Stranger Condition. The function of Relationship Enhancement applied equally to both conditions. The frequency with which each function was mentioned within the two relationship conditions can be seen in Table 2. (Because two cells had expected frequencies of less than 5, these results must be interpreted cautiously.)

Insert Table 2 about here

Intimacy of disclosure and relationship to recipient

Because Descriptive and Evaluative intimacy were highly intercorrelated ($r = 0.82$), the two scores were combined to form a total intimacy score. A 6 (function) x 2 (condition) x 2 (sex) ANOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis that the intimacy level of self-disclosure would differ as a function of the relationship condition and the reason for disclosing. A significant main effect was found for condition, $F(1,123) = 8.616$, $p < .01$, and for function, $F(1,123) = 2.75$, $p < .05$. (See Table 3). Not surprisingly, self-disclosure intimacy was higher in the Significant Other condition ($M = 2.92$) than in the Stranger condition ($M = 3.78$). A Duncan multiple range test was conducted to test for differences in self-disclosure intimacy among the six self-disclosure functions.

Significantly higher levels of intimacy were disclosed for the purposes of Self-Clarification (M = 2.70), Self-Expression (M = 3.17) and Giving Information (M = 3.41) than for the purposes of Social Control (M = 4.18) and Eliciting Information (M = 4.47). Self-disclosure for Social Validation (M = 3.54) was also more intimate than that for Eliciting Information. Self-disclosure intimacy was not found to differ as a function of the discloser's sex. There were also no significant interaction effects.

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion

The results of Study I, using self-report data in a hypothetical situation, were supportive of all three of the hypotheses listed above. Results indicated that the most frequently cited reasons for communicating personal information about oneself, regardless of the target person involved, were: 1) to develop or enhance the relationship, and 2) to get feedback and validation from others regarding their self-concept. The current findings indicated that males and females self-disclose for the same reasons.

The reasons for self-disclosure were found to vary systematically with the subjects' relationship to the target person. When the recipient was a relative stranger, self-disclosure was more likely to serve the functions of eliciting information and social control than when the target was someone with whom the subject had an enduring relationship. When the target was a significant other, the functions

of expression, self-clarification and social validation were more frequently mentioned.

The present results also indicated that more intimate information was disclosed when the target was someone with whom the participant was well acquainted. This finding is not surprising and reflects the results of previous work in this area. Of more interest is that intimacy of self-disclosure varied systematically with the function the communication served. The results suggested that people reveal more of themselves when expressing pent-up emotions, seeking clarification of their attitudes and beliefs, or when seeking social validation, i.e. feedback, advice or approval. Individuals reveal less when disclosure is a means to motivate the recipient to reciprocate or to control a social situation.

The first study, then, provided support for all of the hypotheses regarding function and intimacy level of self-disclosure with various target persons. However, because of the discrepancies often found between self-report measures of self-disclosure and observations of individuals' actual self-disclosure in vivo, a second study was conducted to determine how people perceive their reasons for self-disclosure in their actual day-to-day interactions. The interaction record, a methodology developed by Wheeler and Nezlek (1977), allows participants to observe and record their own social behavior as they go about their daily lives. This method, according to Nezlak, Wheeler & Reis (1983), has high levels of external validity. It avoids the aritificiality of a laboratory setting, and avoids some of the systematic distortions of questionnaire studies, in which subjects are asked to generalize about their own behavior.

This method allowed the three hypotheses discussed above to be tested using daily recordings of subjects' social interactions. Also in this study, the sex of the recipient was specified, to allow an assessment of its effect on function and intimacy level of disclosure.

Study II

Method

Sample

One hundred nineteen college students were selected from the same population used in Study I. Fifty-four males and 65 females ranging in age from 18 to 27 (mean age = 18.96 yrs.) participated in order to fulfill a course requirement.

Procedure

Students were again recruited through announcements in classes, experimental sign-up sheets and posted flyers. Meetings with groups of 20 - 50 participants apiece were held at the beginning of the class period, during which time subjects completed a demographic information form, and received written and verbal instructions regarding their role in the study. Participants were instructed to keep daily, permanent records of their social interactions. In order to emphasize the importance of daily recordings (rather than waiting and recording several days' interactions at a later point), subjects were told to leave their written records in a prearranged location for the experimenter to pick up every other day (this location was close to their classroom). They were told to record only those interactions in which there was an exchange of personal information, and a description of what constituted "personal information" was

provided. The subjects' role as both participant and observer was emphasized. In order to increase reliability of ratings, written instructions were also provided to all participants, with detailed information on how to fill out the forms under different interactional circumstances, and definitions of all terms on the form, such as intimacy and closeness.

After the instructions were given, each subject received 25 4" x 5" Interaction Record Forms on which to record information pertaining to their interactions. (More forms were always available for those who needed them). This initial meeting took 20 minutes.

Subjects maintained their daily records for two one-week segments separated by a period of approximately 5 weeks. To avoid situational variations such as holidays, exam periods or other unusual circumstances, the observational period was divided. The first week was early in the Spring semester and the second week was just after mid-semester and before the final examinations period. At the beginning of the second week, a brief meeting was held, in which instructions were repeated and additional forms provided.

Interaction Record Form (IRF)

Taken from Wheeler and Nezlek (1977) with some modifications, this form was completed by the participants for each interaction in which they self-disclosed. There were no limits placed on the number of interactions registered; the only rule was that the interaction be a natural occurrence. The IRF, shown in Figure 1, asked for the subject's relationship with the recipient of the disclosure; in this case, four categories were used: Romantic Partner, Friend, Acquaintance (equivalent to the "Stranger" condition of Study I) and

Relative. Subjects recorded the intimacy level of the interaction, their satisfaction with the interaction, and their feelings of closeness with the recipient on three seven-point scales (see Figure 1). They were also asked to check off their reason for disclosing from the following list: 1)release of pent-up feelings (Self-Expression); 2) talking about one's beliefs and opinions to clarify one's own position (Self-Clarification); 3) eliciting feedback from others, or validating one's self-concept (Social Validation); 4) to get a desired result from the person, to get something I want (Social Control); 5) to encourage the other to provide information about him/herself (Eliciting Information); 6) to enhance our relationship, make it grow (Relationship Enhancement); and, a new category, 7) to allow the other person to know me better (Giving Information).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Results

Twenty-nine (24.4%) subjects participated only in week one of the data collection; however, all participants were included in the analysis, with the second week's data for those 29 treated as missing data. Across the two weeks, there were a total of 3026 interactions recorded, with 1828 completed during the first week, and 1198 completed during the second week, an average of 18.5 records per subject. Females completed 1882 records, while males completed 1144. The average length of an interaction was 30.9 minutes (SD = 36.9). Thirty-seven per cent of the interactions were reported as

self-initiated, 34% were mutually initiated, and 26% were reported as initiated by the other person. (Unclear initiations accounted for 3% of the interactions). Interactions were distributed among the recipient groups as follows: romantic partners--428, friends--1566, relatives--411, acquaintances--618; males--1380, females--1645. The number of disclosures serving each function were: Self-Expression--629, Self-Clarification--361, Self-Validation--677, Social Control--164, Elicit Information--182, Give Information--338, Relationship Enhancement--588.

Function of self-disclosure and relationship to recipient

In order to determine whether the reasons for disclosing varied systematically with the discloser's relationship with the recipient, a 2 (sex of discloser) x 4 (relationship with recipient) x 2 (recipient sex) multiple analysis of variance was conducted with the seven reasons for disclosure serving as the dependent variables. The pooled, multivariate results showed significant effects for discloser sex, Wilks $\lambda = 0.6459$, $F(7, 111) = 8.694$, $p < .001$; for relationship with recipient, $\lambda = 0.4100$, $F(14,104) = 10.705$, $p < .001$; and for recipient sex, $\lambda = 0.6171$, $F(7,111) = 9.830$, $p < .001$. A number of interaction effects were also significant including discloser sex x relationship with recipient, $\lambda = 0.6493$, $F(14,104) = 4.013$, $p < .001$; discloser sex x recipient sex, $\lambda = 0.7632$, $F(7,111) = 4.921$, $p < .001$; relationship with recipient x recipient sex, $\lambda = 0.4400$, $F(14,104) = 9.467$, $p < .001$, and lastly, the three-way interaction, $\lambda = 0.7390$, $F(14,104) = 2.630$, $p < .01$. Because the results for the 3-way interaction were difficult to interpret, only main and 2-way interaction effects will be discussed

further.

Significant multivariate effects were followed up with univariate tests, which provided orthogonal contrasts among the levels of each factor for each dependent variable. Because of the large number of comparisons possible (35 possible orthogonal comparisons, including main and interaction effects), the .01 alpha level was used to reject the null hypothethesis, and η^2 was computed, which is a measure of the percentage of the variance accounted for by each mean difference. The latter statistic provided a check against overinterpreting statistically significant results.

Tests related to discloser sex are presented in Table 4. As can be seen in the Table, the significant main effect for discloser sex was largely due to more frequent disclosures by females (M = 6.29) than males (M = 4.04) for the purpose of Self-Expression and more frequent disclosures by females (M = 3.26) than males (M = 2.76) for the purpose of Self-Clarification. A difference between females (M = 6.29) and males (M = 4.04) on the use of self-disclosure for Relationship Enhancement was also found.

Insert Table 4 about here

The average frequency of each self-disclosure function for each of the four types of discloser-recipient relationships (romantic partner, friend, relative and acquaintance) is presented in Table 5. The results displayed in Table 6 show that differences among the relationship types were found for all functions of self-disclosure. A large percentage of the variance among the relationship types was due to group differences in the number of interactions that served the purpose of Self-Clarification. This reason was noted more frequently for interactions with friends (M = 2.87) than for those with romantic partners (M = 0.91) and relatives (M = 1.01), and least frequently with acquaintances (M = 0.50). Disclosures with romantic partners were less likely to serve the purpose of Social Validation (M = 0.54) than were those with friends (M = 3.13). Disclosures with romantic partuers were also less likely to serve the purpose of Social Control (M = 0.16) than were those with friends (M = 0.52) or acquaintances (M = 0.53). Finally, disclosures to romantic partners were less likely to serve the functions of Eliciting Information (M = 0.12) and Giving Information (M = 0.27) than were those with friends (M = 0.83 for Eliciting Information; M = 1.42 for Giving Information). Interactions with acquaintances were, like those with romantic partners, less likely than those with friends to serve the function of Giving Information (M = 0.91). The purpose of Relationship Enhancement, on the other hand, was cited more

frequently when interactions were with romantic partners (M = 1.30) and friends (M = 2.37) than with relatives (M = 0.20).

Insert Tables 5 and 6 about here

The main effect for recipient sex (shown in Table 4) was due principally to the higher number of interactions serving the purpose of Relationship Enhancement that were reported with male recipients (M = 3.03) relative to female recipients (M = 2.71), a result accounting for over 30% of the variance. There were also significantly more interactions serving the purpose of Self-Expression with female recipients (M = 3.13) than with male recipients (M = 2.16).

The 2-way interaction effects were examined next, using ^{2} again to determine the percentage of variance accounted for by each mean difference. Although both the discloser sex x relationship type and the discloser sex x recipient sex interactions showed significant multivariate effects, none of the univariate tests were significant. For the relationship type x recipient sex interaction, several univariate tests met the criterion for significance. As Table 7 and Figure 2 show, the extent to which disclosures served different functions with male and female recipients was significantly modified by the type of relationship that existed between the two people. For example, when the recipient was an acquaintance, disclosures to males more frequently served the purpose of Self-Clarification (M = 0.35) than did disclosures to females (M = 0.27). With friends and

relatives, the opposite was true; more Self-Clarifying disclosures were directed to female friends (M = 0.85) and to female relatives (M = 0.75) than to male friends (M = 0.31) or male relatives (M = 0.24). When the purpose was Social Control, a somewhat different pattern appeared. If the recipient was a friend or relative, there was no difference between male and female recipients in the frequency with which self-disclosures served this purpose. When the recipient was an acquaintance, however, disclosures were more likely to serve the purpose of social control with male (M = 0.35) than female (M =0.19) recipients.

Insert Table 7 and Figure 2 about here

Intimacy of self-disclosure and relationship with recipient

Means for intimacy, closeness and satisfaction were computed for each type of recipient across interactions for each subject and are presented in Table 8. The intercorrelations among Intimacy, Closeness, and Satisfaction were: Intimacy x Closeness, r = .55; Intimacy x Satisfaction, r = .62; Closeness x Satisfaction, r = .34. A 2 (discloser sex) x 4 (relationship with recipient) x 2 (recipient sex) MANOVA was performed to test for mean differences between male and female disclosers and recipients, and among types of recipients on the disclosers' three ratings of each interaction. The multivariate tests, using Wilks' λ , showed the following effects to be significant: relationship type, λ = 0.1861, $F(6,112) = 81.632$, $p < .001$, recipient sex, λ = 0.7839, $F = (3,115) = 10.570$, $p <$

.001, and the relationship type x recipient sex interaction, λ = 0.8220, $F(6,112) = 4.042$, $p < .001$. No effect was found for discloser sex, nor for any other interactions.

Insert Table 8 about here

Comparisons were made among the mean ratings for each of the four types of recipient-discloser relationship. Table 9 summarizes the significant contrasts made between types of recipients. As Table 9 shows, orthogonal comparisons among the four groups were significant for each of the three ratings made. A closer examination of the means indicates that while disclosures to romantic partners were the most intimate (M = 5.25 for romantic partners vs. M = 4.53 for friends, M = 4.86 for relatives, and M = 3.42 for acquaintances), disclosers felt closer to relatives (M = 5.66) than to romantic partners (M = 5.23), friends (M = 5.03) or acquaintances (M = 3.79), and more satisfied in interactions with relatives (M = 5.41 vs. M = 4.83 for romantic partners, M = 5.18 for friends, and M = 4.28 for acquaintances). Interactions with acquaintances were less intimate, less close and less satisfying than those with the other three types of recipients.

Insert Table 9 about here

The next set of univariate analyses tested the effect of

recipient sex on ratings of intimacy level, closeness and satisfaction with the interaction. Despite the significant multivariate results, none of the univariate tests surpassed the required alpha level.

The interaction between the discloser's relationship with the recipient and the recipient's sex, however, did show significant univariate effects. These results, summarized in Table 9 and in Figure 3, indicate that when the recipient is a friend, females receive more intimate disclosures (M = 4.65) than males (M = 4.28), whereas when the recipient is a relative, the intimacy of the disclosures is more nearly equal. The same pattern is observed for feelings of closeness, with female friends receiving higher ratings (M = 5.23) than male friends (M =4.87) and the ratings for female (M = 5.66) and male (M = 5.56) relatives being more nearly the same. For ratings of satisfaction, the pattern is somewhat different. Interactions with female friends are again rated more highly (M = 5.34) than those with male friends (M = 5.07), but with relatives the pattern is reversed. Interactions with male relatives are viewed as more satisfying (M = 5.60) than those with female relatives (M = 5.35).

Insert Figure 3 about here

Function and intimacy level of self-disclosure

Mean intimacy, closeness and satisfaction ratings for each function of self-disclosure are shown in Table 11. A one-way multiple analysis of variance tested for differences among the seven

functions on the three ratings. Multivariate results indicated a significant effect for function, $\lambda = 0.1999$, $F(18,101) = 22.466$, $p < .0001$. Post hoc orthogonal contrasts showed significantly higher levels of intimacy in interactions serving a Self-Expressive function ($M = 4.43$) than those serving a Social Validation function ($M = 4.26$), $\eta^2 = .0382$, $p < .0001$ (which were the second most intimate interactions). The intimacy levels of interactions serving the functions of Eliciting Information ($M = 2.24$), $\eta^2 = .1318$, $p < .0001$, and Social Control ($M = 2.20$), $\eta^2 = .0643$, $p < .0001$, were lower than those of interactions serving other functions.

The closeness ratings followed a similar pattern. Participants felt closer to the recipient when disclosing for Self-Expression ($M = 4.89$) than for any other purpose $\eta^2 = .0630$, $p < .0001$. Those reasons for disclosing that were associated with significantly lower ratings of closeness were Giving Information ($M = 3.56$), $\eta^2 = .0458$, $p < .0001$, Eliciting Information ($M = 2.56$), $\eta^2 = .1164$, $p < .0001$, and Social Control ($M = 2.55$), $\eta^2 = .0276$, $p < .0001$.

The self-disclosure functions were most clearly differentiated by the participants' ratings of satisfaction with their interactions. When the purpose of disclosure was Self-Expression ($M = 4.97$), satisfaction was higher than when it was any other purpose ($M = 4.80$), $\eta^2 = .0255$, $p < .0001$. Those for Self-Expression and Social Validation were significantly more satisfying than those for Relationship Enhancement ($M = 4.64$), $\eta^2 = .0128$, $p < .01$, which were correspondingly more satisfying than those for Giving Information $\eta^2 = .0339$, $p < .0001$. Those for Eliciting Information ($M = 3.87$) were less satisfying than the previously

mentioned four groups, $\eta^2 = .1230$, $p < .0001$. Interactions serving the purpose of Social Control (M = 2.56) were rated as least satisfying of the groups, $\eta^2 = .0862$, $p < .0001$.

Insert Table 11 about here

Discussion

An examination of Table 4 reveals that self-expression, social validation and relationship enhancement were mentioned most frequently as reasons for self-disclosing by female and male disclosers alike. These reasons were preferred in Study I (see Table 1), in which a hypothetical situation was employed. These functions, along with giving information, were also highly endorsed in Study II, in which college students kept records of their daily interactions.

The social control function, which refers to those times in which self-disclosure serves as a means to achieve desired results, was only infrequently mentioned in the present two studies. Since this function of communication has gotten considerable attention in the literature (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Ludwig, Franco & Malloy, 1986; Patterson, 1982; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986), its infrequency was unexpected. This may be due in part to social desirability pressures, since manipulating and impression management may not have as desirable connotations as other functions. It may also be true that some impression management is automatic, i.e. operates below the threshold of conscious awareness. Patterson (1982) argued that the

functions of nonverbal behavior often operate below consciousness. The less socially desirable functions of verbal communication may more likely be denied as well.

Function of self-disclosure and relationship to recipient

The hypothesis that reasons for self-disclosing would vary systematically with the type of relationship the discloser has with the recipient was supported by the results from Study II. Significant differences were found among the interactions with romantic partners, friends, relatives and acquaintances for each of the seven self-disclosure functions investigated in this study.

The results from Study II indicate that disclosures to romantic partners and friends often served the purposes of self-expression and relationship enhancement, in comparison with acquaintances and relatives. In addition, disclosures to friends often served the functions of self-clarification and social validation. The only functions that were mentioned frequently in interactions with acquaintances were relationship enhancement and social control (the latter appears frequent relative to its occurrence with other recipients). No particular self-disclosure function distinguished interactions with relatives from those with the other three recipient types.

Some similarities in the function-relationship type association were noted across the two studies reported here. The association of self-expression, self-clarification, and social validation with the Significant Other condition in Study I parallels the association of these three functions with interactions with friends and romantic partners in Study II. In both studies, social control was more

likely to be a function of self-disclosure with a little-known acquaintance than with a more familiar, well-known target. According to Archer (1979), when disclosure serves the purpose of social control, it is either impression management, i.e. presenting oneself in a positive light in the guise of honest self-revelation, or it is a "route to opinion conformity by revealing the discloser's attitudes and feelings that are similar to those of the target" (p. 44). Gitter and Black (1976) found that information disclosed in this context may even be falsified or "gilded" to create an impression on the target. The results reported here suggest that such impression management may be less needed as a relationship matures and stabilizes (especially with romantic partners and relatives). This dropping of masks and pretenses is considered central to the development and maintainance of intimacy (Dahms, 1972; Erikson, 1963; Rogers, 1972).

This similarity between the Stranger condition of Study I and interactions with acquaintances in Study II brings to mind Hornstein's research (1985) on the structural characteristics of self-disclosure in different kinds of relationship contexts. In Hornstein's study, the structures of telephone interactions between strangers and between acquaintances were similar, while the structure of conversation between friends was quite distinct. The current research similarly demonstrates that the relative frequencies of the relationship enhancement and social control functions in the Stranger condition of Study I duplicated to some degree the frequency of these functions in interactions between acquaintances in Study II. In contrast, the function of eliciting information, did not show the

same pattern of association from Study I to Study II. It predominated in the Stranger Condition in Study I, while not differentiating interactions with acquaintances from those with other recipients in Study II.

Given that these were two methodologically diverse studies, the repetition of many of the associations between particular functions and recipients is significant. These findings support the principle hypothesis of this study, that the desired outcome of self-disclosing communication varies with the relationship between the discloser and the target person.

The importance of relationship type in determining self-disclosure function confirms, in verbal communication, Patterson's (1982) model of nonverbal communicative function, which emphasizes the importance of the speaker-listener relationship as an important antecedent factor in determining the function of behavior in an interaction. Derlega and Grzelak (1979) have claimed that self-disclosure function mediates the relationship between the perceived appropriateness of the disclosure and the speaker's relationship to the recipient. Studies of recipients' and observers' ratings of self-disclosure appropriateness have generally been limited to laboratory settings and interactions between strangers. This research indicates that the identity of the target person restricts the range of functions that self-disclosure is likely to serve and therefore, information about self-disclosure appropriateness has been similarly restricted to the extent that its study has focused only on stranger-stranger interactions.

Recipient sex and function of self-disclosure

The recipient's sex also affected the reasons why participants disclosed to particular targets. Individuals were more likely to disclose to females for a cathartic effect (self-expression) and more likely to be concerned with building a relationship with male recipients. Rose (1985) found that same and cross-sex friendships served different functions for a group of young adults. For example, women reported receiving less acceptance and intimacy and more companionship from cross-sex friendships than did men. The current study found, in contrast, that men and women had similar motives when self-disclosing to friends. The interaction of the sex of the recipient and level of acquaintance (rather than the discloser's sex) best predicted reasons for self-disclosing.

Intimacy of disclosure and relationship to the recipient

Across both studies, significant differences in mean intimacy level of disclosure were found as a function of the subjects' relationship with the recipient. Casual acquaintances, not surprisingly, received the least intimate disclosures in both studies.

In Study II, participants rated their interactions with their romantic partners as more intimate than those with friends or relatives. This finding is reminiscent of other research, which has also found that the most intimate disclosures occur with romantic partners (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Komarovsky, 1976; Morton, 1978).

It is interesting to note, however, that feelings of closeness and satisfaction with an interaction do not always perfectly mirror the level of intimacy of that interaction. Participants who disclosed to relatives felt closest to them, and most satisfied in

interactions with them. Quite likely, young adults who do not have good relationships with relatives choose not to self-disclose with them at all, and many of the current sample did not.

Feelings of closeness were also higher with friends than with romantic partners. Although other research indicates that most adults report that their closest relationships are with their romantic partners, the age group sampled here may be more likely to form closer relationships with friends until they are developmentally ready for a sustained relationship with a romantic partner.

In both of the current studies, the hypothesis that individuals would disclose less personal information to a little-known acquaintance than to an intimate other was supported. This finding supports Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory which states that the intimacy level of information exchanged should increase as the relationship progresses and becomes stabilized. The findings are similar to Morton's (1978), who also found more private facts discussed between spouses than strangers. Similarly, a longitudinal study (Taylor, 1968) found increases in depth and breadth of self-disclosure between male college roommates over time, while Frankfurt (1973) obtained similar results with college females using a hypothetical situation in which level of acquaintance was manipulated.

Intimacy of self-disclosure and sex of recipient

The results showing that female friends received more intimate disclosures than male friends replicate findings from numerous studies (Archer, 1979; Cozby, 1973). However, the results of Study II indicate that the tendency of both males and females to disclose

more to females applies mainly to friends. When disclosure is to relatives, the recipients of the most intimate disclosures and the interactions that provided the most satisfaction were as likely to be with males as females.

Given how frequently females are found to disclose more than males (Archer, 1979), especially among college students, comment should be made regarding the absense of any sex of subject effect on self-disclosure intimacy. One explanation may lie in the "emerging norm of full disclosure" discussed by Rubin, Hill, Peplau & Dunkel-Schetter (1980), which they felt explained equally intimate disclosures by males and females with their romantic partners. The lack of any differences in intimacy based on the discloser's sex contradicts speculations such as that by Banikiotes, Kubinski & Pursell (1981) that males avoid the intimacy of self-disclosure, or that intimacy is a "feminine" characteristic (Grigsby & Weatherby, 1983). It is also of interest that the sex of discloser x sex of recipient interaction did not reach significance. The finding cited by others (Archer, 1979; Davis, 1978; Shaffer & Ogden, 1986; and Stokes, Fuerer & Childs, 1980) that males and females disclose differentially based on the sex of their recipient was not upheld. Two reasons for the discrepancy between the present work and the other studies cited here may be 1) that Study II was conducted in a naturalistic, rather than the more common laboratory setting, and 2) this study allowed subjects to rate their own disclosures rather than have more objective observers do the ratings. Male subjects may have inflated the intimacy ratings of their own disclosures more than females. A number of writers have suggested that females have higher

standards for intimacy than males in general (e.g. Rubin, 1985). Also, many of the studies that found males and females disclosing differentially to opposite sex recipients were in high-demand situations, in which the recipient was a stranger (e.g. Davis, 1978), and not necessarily one of the participant's choosing. When people choose their own targets, as in the present study, sex effects may well be minimized. It is also important to note that there have been other studies which have failed to reveal a sex difference in self-disclosure (e.g. Shapiro & Swenson, 1977).

Function and intimacy level of self-disclosure.

In Study II, the differences in intimacy level among interactions serving different functions showed a similar pattern as in Study I. In both studies, disclosures for self-expression were among the most intimate, while those for eliciting information and social control were least intimate. Disclosures aimed at self-clarification reveal a difference in the two sets of results. In Study I, these were the most intimate disclosures, while in Study II they were of average intimacy. The closeness and satisfaction ratings in Study II closely matched the intimacy ratings with regard to self-disclosure function.

Conclusions

The present study demonstrated the wide range of reasons people have for self-disclosure, and the frequency that each arises in daily interaction. Certain reasons for self-disclosing were more predominant with some target persons than others. College students disclosed the most intimate material with romantic partners, while feeling closest to friends. The impact of the functional value of self-disclosure on the intimacy level of the interaction was found to be significant.

Table 1

Distribution of Self-Disclosure Function

by Sex of Discloser

	Total		Females		Males	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Self-Expression	18	12.5	12	13.6	6	10.7
Self-Clarification	10	6.9	7	8.0	3	5.4
Social Validation	26	18.1	18	20.5	8	14.3
Social Control	11	7.6	5	5.7	6	10.7
Eliciting Information	15	10.4	12	13.6	3	5.4
Relationship Enhancement	64	44.4	34	38.6	30	53.6
Totals	144		88		56	

Table 2

Function of Self-Disclosure by Relationship Condition

	Stranger		Significant Other		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Self-Expression	8	5.6	10	94.4	18	12.5
Self-Clarification	2	20.0	8	80.0	10	6.9
Social Validation	7	26.9	19	73.1	26	18.1
Social Control	8	72.7	3	27.3	11	7.6
Eliciting Information	12	80.0	3	20.0	15	10.4
Relationship Enhancement	34	53.1	30	46.9	64	44.4
Totals	64		80		144	

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Disclosure Intimacy for Each Relationship Condition and Function of Self-Disclosure[1]

Relationship Condition	M	SD	N
Stranger	3.97	1.07	67
Male Discloser	4.00	1.00	25
Female Discloser	3.95	1.13	42
Significant Other	3.21	1.15	83
Male Discloser	3.35	1.11	37
Female Discloser	3.09	1.17	46
Self-Disclosure Function			
Self-Expression	3.17	1.10	18
Self-Clarification	2.70	0.82	10
Social Validation	3.54	1.14	26
Social Control	4.18	0.60	11
Eliciting Information	4.47	0.74	15
Giving Information	3.41	1.27	64
Totals	3.52	1.18	144

[1] Lower scores reflect higher levels of intimacy.

Table 4

Effects of Discloser and Recipient Sex on Function of Self-Disclosure

Function	Male Mean	Female Mean	t	p<	η^2
Discloser Sex					
Self-Expression	4.04	6.29	3.803	.001	.12
Self-Clarification	2.76	3.26	5.304	.0001	.20
Social Validation	5.04	6.18	-	NS	-
Social Control	1.47	1.30	-	NS	-
Eliciting Information	1.32	1.70	-	NS	-
Giving Information	2.06	3.46	-	NS	-
Relationship Enhancement	3.94	5.74	3.015	.01	.08
Recipient Sex[1]					
Self-Expression	2.16	3.13	3.138	.01	.08
Self-Clarification	1.51	1.52	-	NS	-
Social Validation	2.48	3.19	-	NS	-
Social Control	0.80	0.58	-	NS	-
Elicit Information	0.68	0.85	-	NS	-
Give Information	1.20	1.63	-	NS	-
Relationship Enhancement	2.35	2.60	7.163	.0001	.32

[1] Romantic partners not included, as subjects reported only opposite sex romantic partners.

Table 5

Mean Frequencies for Each Function of Self-Disclosure by Relationship Type and Recipient Sex

Function	Romantic Partners[1]		Friends		Relatives		Acquaintances	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Self-Expression	1.15	0.60	1.02	1.85	0.25	0.77	0.25	0.24
Self-Clarification	0.33	0.21	0.75	0.85	0.24	0.31	0.35	0.27
Social Validation	0.67	0.38	1.30	1.83	0.31	0.69	0.50	0.50
Social Control	0.24	0.06	0.26	0.26	0.06	0.10	0.35	0.19
Elicit Information	0.18	0.04	0.34	0.50	0.07	0.09	0.18	0.24
Give Information	0.33	0.19	0.61	0.82	0.05	0.19	0.36	0.55
Relationship Enhancement	1.71	0.79	0.82	1.56	0.07	0.13	0.51	0.56

[1] Subjects reported only opposite sex romantic partners.

Table 6

Relationship with Recipient: Effects on Function of Self-Disclosure[1,2]

Contrast	t	p<	η^2
Self-Expression			
RP, F vs R, A	5.715	.0001	.09
Self-Clarification			
F vs RP	8.783	.0001	.18
F vs R	9.059	.0001	.19
F, RP, R vs A	6.948	.0001	.12
Social Validation			
RP vs F	5.738	.0001	.09
RP, F vs R	7.780	.0001	.15
Social Control			
RP vs F	6.475	.0001	.11
RP, F, R vs A	4.988	.0001	.07
Eliciting Information			
RP vs F	5.315	.0001	.08
Giving Information			
RP vs F	3.857	.001	.04
RP, R vs F	4.224	.0001	.05
Relationship Enhancement			
RP, F vs R	4.079	.0001	.05

1 Only significant contrasts are reported.

2 RP = Romantic Partner; F = Friend; R = Relative; A = Acquaintance.

Table 7

Contrasts Between Male and Female Recipients Interacting with Relationship Type: Effects on Reasons for Disclosing[1,2]

Contrast	t	p<	η^2
Self-Clarification			
Male vs female friends and male vs female relatives	6.415	.0001	.15
Male vs female friends and relatives and male vs female acquaintances	3.758	.001	.06
Social Validation			
Male vs female friends and male vs female relatives	4.037	.001	.07
Social Control			
Male vs female friends and relatives and male vs female acquaintances	5.491	.0001	.12
Relationship Enhancement			
Male vs female friends and male vs female relatives	3.900	.001	.06
Male vs female friends and relatives and male vs female acquaintances	3.474	.001	.05

1 Only significant contrasts are included.

2 Romantic partners not included, as subjects reported only opposite sex romantic partners.

Table 8

Mean Ratings of Interactions by

Sex of Discloser and Relationship Type

	Male Discloser			Female Discloser		
	Intimacy	Closeness	Satisfaction	Intimacy	Closeness	Satisfaction
Romantic Partner[1]	5.59	3.71	5.36	5.39	4.85	5.56
Friend						
Male	4.16	4.55	4.90	4.37	5.12	5.20
Female	4.54	5.08	5.30	4.73	5.35	5.38
Relative						
Male	4.74	5.57	5.60	4.68	5.56	5.61
Female	4.81	5.47	5.18	4.93	5.81	5.49
Acquaintance						
Male	3.18	3.46	3.33	3.41	3.92	4.74
Female	3.33	3.81	4.32	3.41	3.91	4.09

[1] Subjects reported only opposite sex romantic partners.

Table 9

Summary of Significant Orthogonal Contrasts on Subjects' Ratings of Interactions

	t	p≤	η^2
Intimacy Level of Disclosure			
Main effects for relationship type			
Contrast			
RP vs F	2.842	.01	.02
RP, F vs R	6.083	.0001	.10
RP, F, R vs A	9.883	.0001	.22
Interaction between relationship type and recipient sex			
Contrast			
Male and female friends vs Male and female relatives	8.264	.0001	.23
Feelings of Closeness			
Main effects for relationship type			
Contrast			
RP vs F	4.153	.0001	.05
RP, F vs R	6.606	.0001	.11
RP, F, R vs A	6.511	.0001	.11
Interaction between relationship type and recipient sex			
Contrast			
Male and female friends vs Male and female relatives	9.111	.0001	.26
Feelings of Satisfaction			
Main effects for relationship type			
Contrast			
RP vs F	8.518	.0001	.17
RP, F vs R	11.270	.0001	.27
RP, F, R vs A	10.054	.0001	.22
Interaction between relationship type and recipient sex			
Contrast			
Male and female friends vs Male and female relatives	6.842	.0001	.17
Male and female friends and relatives vs Male and female acquaintances	5.279	.0001	.11

Table 10

Mean Ratings of Interactions Serving Different Functions

	Rating		
Reason for Disclosure	Intimacy	Closeness	Satisfaction
Self-Expression	4.43	4.89	4.97
Social Validation	4.27	4.60	4.80
Relationship Enhancement	3.99	4.54	4.64
Self-Clarification	3.50	3.82	3.88
Giving Information	3.30	3.56	3.87
Eliciting Information	2.24	2.56	3.56
Social Control	2.20	2.55	2.56

Figure 1

INTERACTION RECORD FORM

ID# _____ Record # _____

Date_____ Time _____ a.m. p.m. Length_____

Form: Face to face _____ By telephone_____

Initiator: Self_____ Other _____ Mutual _____ Unclear_____

Initials ____ ____ ____ Sex: M_____ F _____

Relationship:

____ boyfriend/husband
____ girlfriend/wife
____ male close friend
____ female close friend
____ male casual acquaintance
____ female casual acquaintance
____ male relative
____ female relative

Feelings of closeness in the interaction:

Very close 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Not at all

Degree of privacy of the information provided:

Private 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Public

Satisfaction:

Pleasant 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Unpleasant

Why did you share this information with this particular person? What would be your reason? Check the most applicable reason: (Check only one)

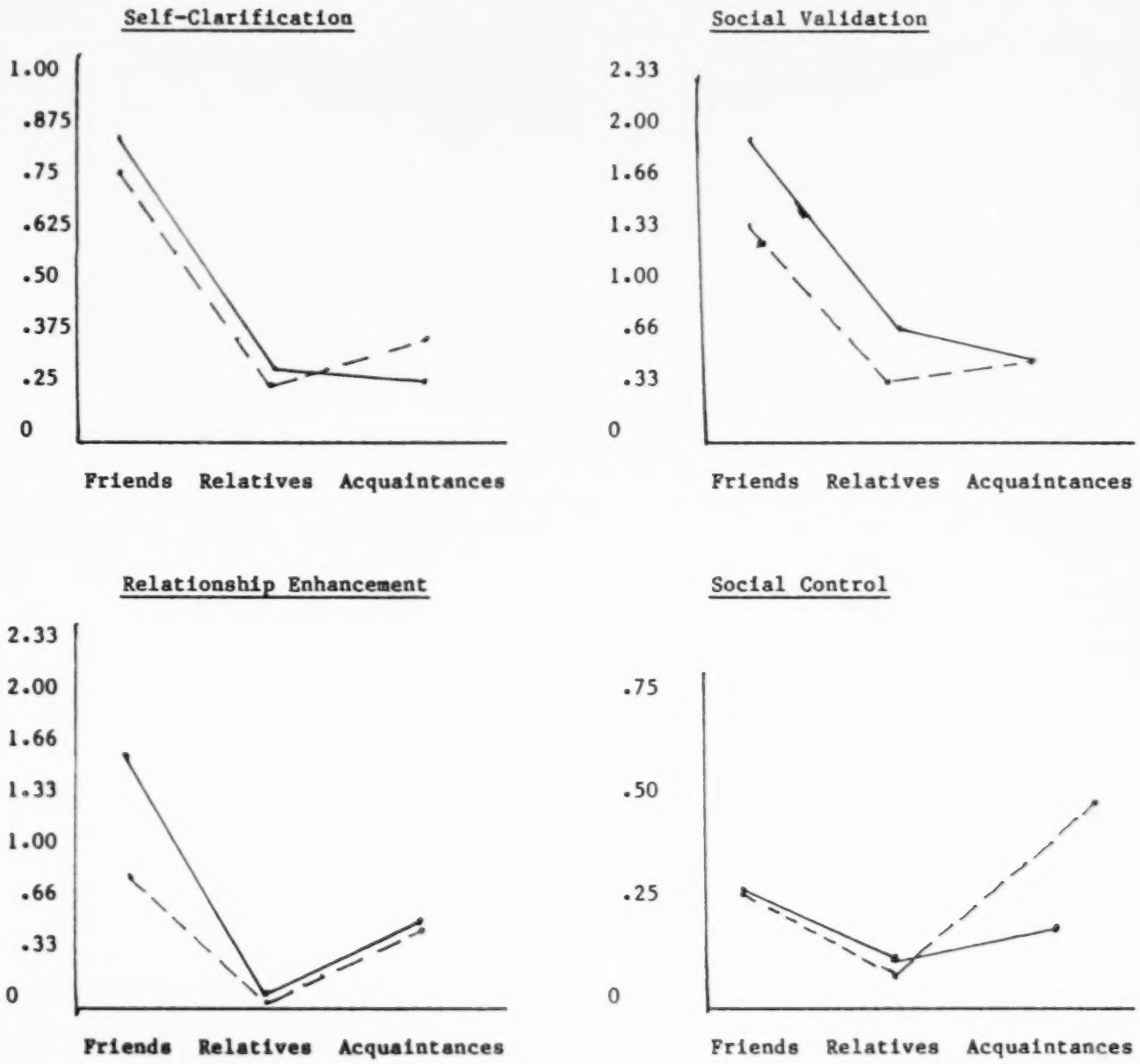
____ To express myself, for emotional release.
____ To clarify my own opinions and thoughts.
____ For self-validation, to obtain feedback about attitudes, values, ideas. beliefs and/or worries.
____ To develop or enhance our relationship; to make it grow.
____ To get some desired result out of that person, to get what I want.
____ To encourage the other to provide information about him/herself.
____ To give information that can help the person know more about me and understand me better.
____ Other (explain): _____
_____
_____

Did the other person self-disclose too? Yes_____ No_____.

Figure 2

Interaction of Recipient Sex and

Relationship Type on Function of Self-Disclosure[1,2,3]



1 Only significant results are shown.

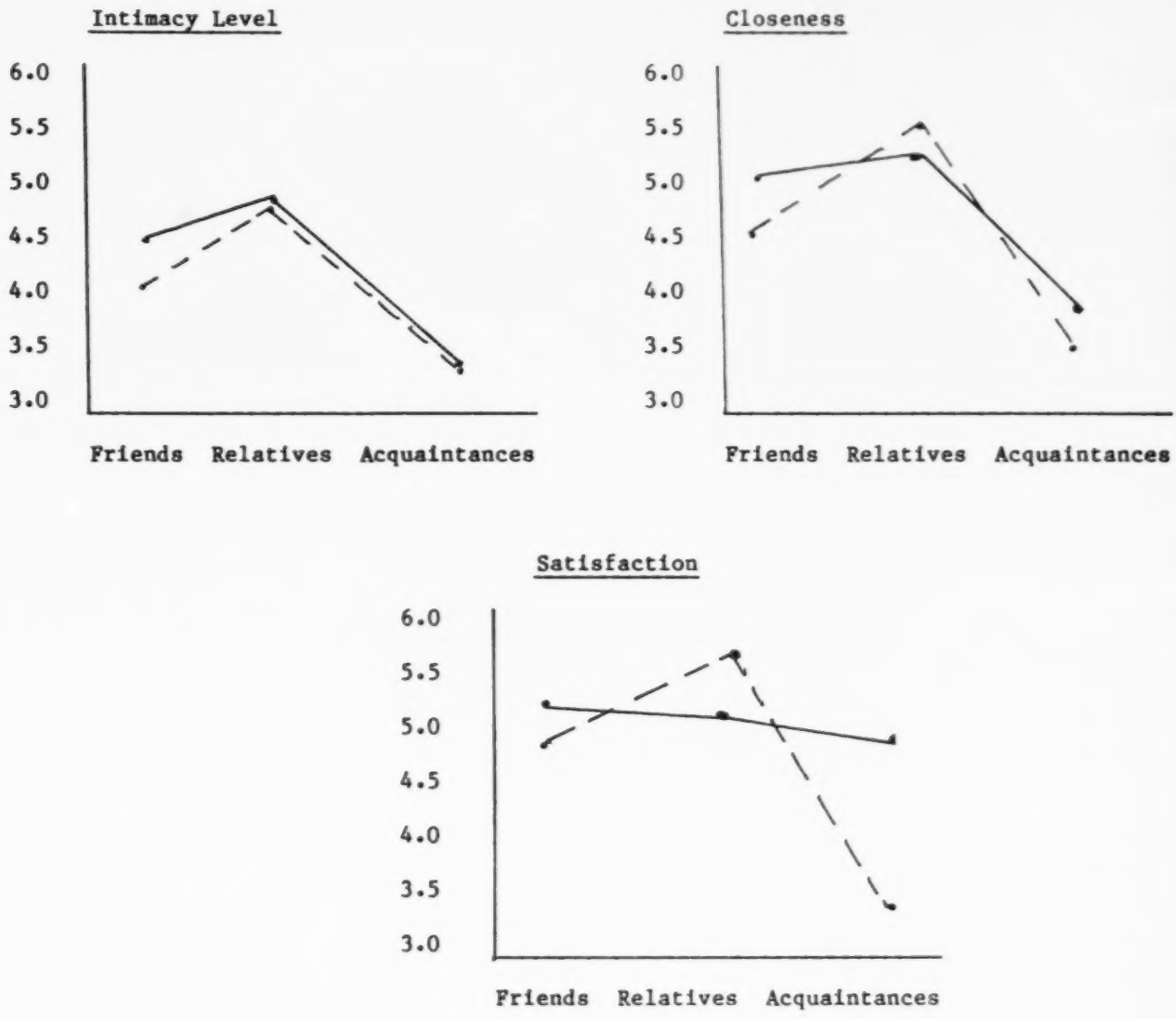
2 X axis = Type of relationship;
Y axis = Mean number of interactions;
--- = Male recipients;
___ = Female recipients.

3 Romantic partners not included, because subjects reported only opposite sex romantic partners.

Figure 3

Interaction of Recipient Sex and

Relationship Type on Subjects' Ratings of Self-Disclosure[1,2,3]



1 X axis = Type of relationship;

Y axis = Mean rating;

--- = Male recipients;

___ = Female recipients.

2 Romantic partners not included.

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